

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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Chief, WID

Chief of Station, Guatemala

KUGOWN Priority Assignments

"Psychological Barometer"

1. The following "Psychological Barometer" report for the week ending 16 October 1953 is submitted in accordance with the priority assignments recently established for this station by headquarters. No attempt has been made to measure the degree to which reported attitudes toward local conditions are held by particular classes or occupation groups. However, it can be safely stated that hopelessness is the majority attitude of the admittedly disorganized opposition.
 - a. Group or individual attitudes reflected in this report: business and professional men, urban industrial workers, army officers, newspaper editorials, government employees. The attitudes of farm owners and operators generally coincide with that of business and professional men. Those groups not represented in this report (e.g., students, farm laborers, enlisted men) will be included in subsequent reports on this subject.
 - b. Summary for the week ending 16 October 1953:
A general feeling of hopelessness prevails with regard to existing conditions. All groups contacted during the reporting period expressed the belief that internal opposition forces are disorganized, discredited, and incapable of undertaking effective action against Communism and/or the incumbent administration.

Upper, middle, and lower classes are believed to be overwhelmingly anti-Communist but there is no party of individual that they can turn to for guidance or in whom they can place any trust. With few exceptions (e.g., market women) the people look upon "anti-Communist" appeals with apathy and distrust because so many opportunists have used the "anti-Communist" banner to deceive the people. Existing and defunct anti-Communist groups have dissipated public sympathy by demonstrating a lack of unity, organization, leadership, discipline and firm objectives. Ill concealed personal ambitions and flagrant misuse of funds have further discredited opposition

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individuals or groups in the eyes of the people.

Businessmen are increasingly reluctant to take normal capital risks because of unpredictable government policies and the constant threat of impossible labor demands inspired by Communist dominated unions (Business attitudes are reflected in other portions of this section although not specifically identified as such).

Many workers bitterly object (privately) to Communist called strikes against foreign companies but they feel powerless to act because the union leaders obviously enjoy the support of the government. If they do not cooperate, the government backed Communist leaders will see to it that they lose their jobs.

The army's position may be summed up by stating that the majority of active officers are with the side that commands - that is, the side capable of rewarding loyalty and support. The army is uneasy about the steady growth of Communism and is responsive to clearly defined popular opinion, but until or unless the people manifest their discontent by means of a unified, effective opposition it is unlikely that the army would consider any action that would jeopardize the material privileges they now enjoy. Inactive officers, however, are highly critical and would welcome and cooperate with subversive activity designed to overthrow the present government. According to some opposition sources the army, until recently the last hope of the people, is now so thoroughly infiltrated in key positions that it is incapable of acting independently to save Guatemala from Communism. This belief further contributes to the measurable despair which now prevails. Those who believe the army to be heavily infiltrated by Communists feel that exiled groups and/or the U.S. are the only remaining hope.

There is a certain amount (undetermined) of sentiment favoring some (undefined) action by the U.S. to solve the problems facing Guatemala. Direct intervention, political or economic, is not distasteful to some and opposition circles were reportedly heartened by a recent news story which alleged that the U.S. was about to invoke the Monroe Doctrine to combat Communism throughout the hemisphere. On the other hand, those who advocate U.S. action readily admit the variable quality of such sentiments and agree that pro-interventionists might be the first to become hostile toward the U.S. following any direct action. Favorable reaction was reported following the positive measures taken by colonial authorities in British Guiana in the face of a Communist coup. Presumably those favoring such action believe the U.S. should take a firmer position regarding Communism in Latin America.

Not all opposition elements give unreserved support to the U.S. Editorial comments in the independent press deplore U.S. indirection, indecision, appeasement, or lack of policy toward Communism in general and Guatemalan Communism in particular. Generally speaking the impending arrival of a new U.S. Ambassador has created an environment of suspense. Great interest is expressed in the possibility of a more vigorous U.S. policy.

One fairly reliable observer with many middle and low level contacts feels that "the man in the street is afraid." Police ranks have been increased since the Salamá affair and there is the belief (unconfirmed) that police informers are everywhere trying to spot subversives. This observer's contacts are reluctant to talk politics unless they are sure that the person with whom they are talking is secure. Many government workers below the policy and supervisory levels are indifferent or fearful and maintain an apolitical attitude to protect their jobs.

2. The information contained in this report is not exclusively the contribution of Esotrope, as originally envisaged in the priority assignments established by headquarters. Since Esotrope does not have unlimited social mobility it was deemed advisable to include data collected from other sources in order to prepare a report which more nearly reflects the attitudes of all segments of the public.
3. That part of the "psychological barometer" report pertaining to PW activities will be included in the report for the week ending 24 October 1953.
4. To facilitate the collection of information and the preparation of related reports we have been compelled to include some information in this report which would ordinarily be included in the group studies on morale factors which was established as a separate priority assignment. This was necessitated by the obvious fact that psychological attitudes and morale factors are so closely associated. As directed, a single report will be submitted on or about 15 November 1953 to reflect morale factors among students, laborers, army officers, enlisted men, government officials, and business and professional men. Until then, and subsequently, the weekly "psychological barometer" report will be in effect a cross section of attitudes on local conditions with little or no emphasis on groups.

21 October 1953

Kenneth S. Givloch

GLT/cmh
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